

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN**



**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Davis, Norton, Collins, Lieberman**  
**Introduce D.C. Budget Autonomy Legislation**

**WASHINGTON**—Today, Representative Tom Davis (R-VA), chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, and Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), along with Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, and the committee's Ranking Member Joe Lieberman (D-CT) introduced bipartisan legislation that would give the District of Columbia's elected officials authority to approve a significant portion of city's budget.

The legislation, called the "District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 2003" would allow the mayor and city council to enact the locally funded portion of the District's annual budget. The bill still provides for congressional oversight, however. Prior to enactment, Congress would have 30 days to review the budget, which would become effective at the start of the fiscal year. In addition, the federally funded portion of the city's budget would continue to be approved through the current congressional appropriations process.

Under the existing process, the District's appropriations bill has often been tied up in disputes over unrelated appropriations bills, which has resulted in critical delays for city programs. Virtually every year, Congress fails to approve the District's budget until months after the fiscal year has begun. The average delay has been three months. Last year, however, the city went without a budget for nearly six months, affecting planned improvements in foster care, public schools and compensation for police and firefighters.

Unlike other city governments, the District of Columbia cannot significantly reallocate funds to meet the city's changing needs. Instead, it takes an act of Congress. Last year, for example, the District needed to reallocate funds to support the movement of children from foster care to adoption. This funding transfer was delayed for months until a supplemental appropriations bill moved through Congress.

"You may be able to run the federal government that way, but as every mayor and city council member in the nation knows, you cannot run a city that way," Collins said. "The elected

leaders of this city must be given the budget authority they need to provide the fundamental services that city residents rely upon.”

“The District should not be held hostage by needless delays in the Congressional budget process that cost the city money,” Lieberman said. “Our bill will remove the uncertainty that has plagued some past D.C. budgets, and give the District greater control over its own funds. This bill is long overdue, and it represents an important step toward Home Rule.” The Senate bill is cosponsored by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), George Voinovich (R-OH), Ted Stevens (R-AK), Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA).

“While Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure the financial well being of our nation’s capital, the unfortunate reality is that the city’s local budget can get tied up in political stalemates over congressional appropriations that rarely have anything to do with the District’s budget,” Davis said. “It’s time to make sure the District can begin utilizing the next fiscal year’s funds when the fiscal year begins.”

"Short of voting rights and complete independence from Congress, budget autonomy is the most important change Congress could make for the District," Norton said. "With this one bill Congress would offer the city greater equality and the capacity for better fiscal and operational management while making an important step toward streamlining our own procedures."

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